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PRESS RELEASE

July 16, 1990

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**POWERFUL FORM AND POTENT SYMBOL: THE DRAGON IN ASIA**  
**July 24 - November 25, 1990**

A special exhibition--**Powerful Form and Potent Symbol: The Dragon in Asia**--drawn primarily from the Museum's Chinese collection, with some objects from its other Asian holdings and a few loans from private collectors, will be on view from July 24 through November 25, 1990. The earliest Asian artists created dragons from the lines and patterns that decorated bronze vessels; these lines suggested a form and the form suggested the creature. The Asian dragon's origin in graphic, linear patterns distinguishes it from the mythical beasts created by artists who imaginatively joined parts of real animals they had observed, as did artists of the ancient Near East.

J. Keith Wilson, assistant curator of Chinese art, traces the formal evolution of the Asian dragon in a variety of materials over many centuries. About 30 paintings, sculptures, and decorative arts demonstrate the appeal, to artist and viewer, of the fantastical dragon and its symbolic force. The earliest depictions, which owe their existence to art rather than nature, appeared in China over 3,000 years ago during the Bronze Age. At the end of the Bronze Age, a new type of Chinese dragon appeared, perhaps inspired by foreign, composite beasts; this later creature is more naturalistic and has features (horns, snout, legs, scales) that seem to be drawn from deer, horses, tigers, and fish. The later depictions often tell a story, reflecting the growth of myths about the dragon. Remarkably, the Asian dragon managed to absorb the characteristics of real animals without ever losing its original magical identity.

From China, the mythical creature spread to Korea and Japan, where it became the subject of local art and legend.

A fall issue of the Bulletin serves as the catalogue for the exhibition. Gallery talks in the exhibition will be given on Wednesday, November 21, and Sunday, November 25, at 1:30 pm. A "Dragon Hunt" for youngsters and a Family Express event (August 19, 3-4:30 pm) accompany **Powerful Form and Potent Symbol: The Dragon in Asia**.

The exhibition and its programs are part of "Asian Autumn," the Museum's annual celebration of Asian cultures. This year's "Asian Autumn" includes two additional exhibitions, **Linda Butler: Photographs of Japan and Korean Art**, plus performances by Indonesian troupes and many other public programs.

Admission to the Museum, the exhibitions, and all programs is free.

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For additional information, photographs, or slides, please contact Adele Z. Silver, Public Information Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, OH 44106; 216/421-7340.